

**FILE**  
25X1[ ]  
  
SUBJECT: Israel's Military Edge Continues [ ]

25X1

NESA M#86-20085

## Distribution:

## EXTERNAL:

Original - Congressman Hamilton

## INTERNAL:

1 - DIR/DCI/DDCI Exec Staff  
1 - DDI  
1 - ADDI  
1 - NIO/NESA  
1 - C/PES  
1 - PDB Staff  
1 - NID Staff  
6 - CPAS/IMD/CB  
1 - D NESA  
1 - DD/NESA  
1 - C/PPS  
2 - NESA/PPS (1 cy to analyst for sourcing)  
1 - C/NESA/SO  
1 - C/NESA/IA  
1 - C/NESA/PG  
1 - C/NESA/AI  
2 - NESA/AI/I

DATE 6/10/86 **FILE**  
DOC NO NESA M86-20085  
OCR 3  
P&PD 1

DDI/NESA/AI/I/[ ]

Jun 86

25X1

25X1

25X1

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

6 June 1986

Israel's Military Edge Continues [ ]

25X1

Summary

A recent 700-page study by former Israeli army Colonel Emmanuel Wald--portions of which have appeared in the Israeli and US press--exaggerates problems in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) stemming from its 1982 invasion and subsequent occupation of Lebanon. We believe the IDF has largely recovered from the malaise suffered as a result of the Lebanon war and retains a substantial edge over any likely combination of its Arab enemies. Syria is Israel's only serious adversary today, but despite President Assad's strategy of attaining parity with Israel, his forces are no match for the IDF. [ ]

25X1

\* \* \* \* \*

The Israeli military appears to have overcome the morale and discipline problems resulting from its 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Public opinion polling data suggest that the morale and fighting spirit of today's military are little different from that of the military before the invasion. Moreover, widespread public criticism of the conduct and objectives of the war in Lebanon has subsided, and Israeli citizens once again hold the IDF in higher regard than they do any other public institution. [ ]

25X1

Some critics, [ ] overestimate the impact of the war on Israel's fighting capability. They point to declining numbers of draftees interested in pursuing a military career and increasing officer resignations. These trends, while

25X1

-----

This memorandum was prepared by [ ] the Israel-Jordan-PLO Branch, Arab-Israeli Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 6 June 1986 was used in its preparation. Questions and comments should be addressed to Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, [ ]

25X1

25X1

25X1

NESA M#86-20085

25X1

25X1

disturbing to the Ministry of Defense, are not having a major impact on the quality of IDF manpower. The IDF's budgetary difficulties, resulting from Israel's national austerity program, are complicating Israel's long-term efforts to maintain its qualitative superiority over Arab forces, but the IDF is successfully coping by means of a modest reduction in the size of its forces along with acceptable cuts in reserve training, restrictions on the amount of ammunition fired in training, a depletion of ready stocks, and less ambitious equipment modernization plans. [REDACTED]

25X1

#### The Israeli/Syrian Balance

Numerically, Israeli and Syrian forces now are roughly equal, but the IDF's combat capabilities are far greater because of its superior equipment, maintenance, quality of manpower, mobilization system, and command and control network. The comparative figures presented in the 2 June issue of Newsweek discussing the Wald study are misleading and omit a key example of Israeli numerical superiority. [REDACTED]

25X1

--Newsweek's figure for total manpower fails to mention that Israel can activate nearly all of its reserve force of 420,000 within 48 hours, while the bulk of Syria's reserves could not be mobilized on such short notice.

--The Newsweek count for tanks also does not consider important differences. Although Syria's armor force includes 900 modern T-72s--at least equal to Israel's best tank--the bulk of their force is equipped with aging T-55s and T-62s; Israel's inventory includes modern Merkavas, M-60s, Centurions, and some old, but totally refurbished tanks. Additionally, Israeli tank crews are superbly trained--in Lebanon they attained an 80 percent kill rate firing on the move from 2000 meters. Syrian tankers fell far short of this mark, even using their most modern tank--the T-72--firing from a static position at a distance of 1500 meters.

--Israel's inventory of active fighter aircraft has shrunk to approximately 500 planes, due to recent defense budget cuts; Syria flies nearly 600 fighter aircraft. Israel, however, has many state-of-the-art US combat aircraft--F-16s and F-15s--which are superior to Syria's most advanced fighters. More importantly, Syrian pilots are hampered by cumbersome Soviet

25X1

25X1

training and command and control practices and are no match for their Israeli adversaries who continue to demonstrate unmatched initiative and resourcefulness in battle.

--Newsweek's comparison of artillery pieces inflates Syria's edge. Israel has approximately 1200, compared to Syria's roughly 1400 in active service. Israel, however, deploys primarily self-propelled artillery--much more mobile and survivable than Syria's towed artillery. Moreover, Israel's sophisticated arsenal of counter-battery radar and other targeting techniques--which are largely absent on the Syrian side--tilts the balance in this category even further toward Israel.

--The Newsweek figures also exaggerate the significance of Syria's numerical advantage in anti-aircraft missile batteries--Syria has an impressive array of SAMS, compared to few on the Israeli side. Israel, however, relies almost exclusively on its air force for air defense, and expects to attain air superiority soon after hostilities are initiated, thereby requiring far fewer ground-based systems than do the Syrians.

--Newsweek's comparison omitted armored personnel carriers. Israel has nearly 11,000, Syria about 3,300.

25X1

## Outlook


Prime Minister Peres has recently enforced a policy of restraint toward Syria in the face of Assad's military modernization program and the southward creep of Syrian military units in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Peres recognizes that the Israeli public will not accept another war initiated by Israel to achieve limited political objectives. Furthermore, Peres hopes that Israel can avoid an open clash with Syria in the coming months by clarifying the limits of Israel's tolerance.

We believe, however, that Israel has not lost the will or ability to react boldly to defend its interests as underscored by last October's raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunis and the forcedown of a Libyan aircraft in February. If the Israelis perceive Syrian involvement in future terrorist incidents that cause numerous Israeli casualties, Peres will be forced to retaliate. A marked increase in Syrian troops in the southern

25X1



25X1

Bekaa, Syrian interference in Israel's security zone in southern Lebanon, or increasingly provocative Syrian air operations in Lebanon also might lead to an Israeli military response. 

25X1



25X1

25X1

CIA Comparison of Israeli  
and Syrian Order of BattleNewsweek's Order  
of Battle Estimate

	ISRAEL	SYRIA	ISRAEL	SYRIA
MANPOWER TOTAL				
STANDING	160,000	360,000	142,000	400,000+
RESERVE	420,000	275,000+	420,000	275,000
TANKS	3,900	3,900	3,600	4,200
COMBAT AIRCRAFT	500	580	744	600
ARTILLERY PIECES	1,200	1,400	1,000	2,300
MISSILE BATTERIES	20	150	15	165
APC'S	10,600	3,300		

25X1